

AUTHENTICITY OF LOCAL LANGUAGE IN ELT

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ABSTRACT

The present journal article entitled “Authenticity of Local Language in ELT” attempts to present an analysis related to the Local Language Authenticity in ELT. The writer studied course book, reference books, researches in related field and analysed them. The study presents the authenticity of local language in ELT class. Classroom authenticity related to English texts suggests two things: first authenticity is not a characteristic of the text itself, but also derives from its function in a particular context; and secondly, that the primary context of activities and materials used in the language classroom is not relevant to the process of language learning. It suggests that if a text leads to successful pedagogic outcomes, this text can be regarded as authentic one.

KEYWORDS: Authenticity, Non- Authenticity, Local Language, Native Language, Pedagogy

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INTRODUCTION

The present article entitled “Authenticity of Local Language in ELT” aims to investigate and justify authenticity and validity of local language used in texts locally designed for English language development. Comparison is between authentic and non-authentic texts and textbooks prescribed for pedagogic purposes. Authenticity of local language in ELT is investigated and justified on the bases of references.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Language is way of communication and literature can be the content being communicated. Language is a set of gestures, words and phrases with meaning behind them. Literature is the manipulation and use of those gestures, words and phrases. It makes human closer to his/her demand. Cook (2008, p.1) says, "Language is the centre of human life. We use it to express our love or our hatred, to achieve our goal and further our careers, to gain artistic satisfaction or simple pleasure or blaspheme."

In literature, unlike other texts, language is meticulously crafted, not just to inform a reader but also to persuade him and to play and poke at his mind. In the theory, with the right rhetorical devices, we can write one thing but make a reader think something else. For example, if we keep saying something over and over again, our reader might believe it at first, but if we continue repetition, he may start to wonder who the writer is really trying to convince. So, literature is a lot more complicated than the language being used. Literature develops all language skills because literature presents context and extends linguistic knowledge by giving both evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage and complex and exact syntax.

Literature is an artistic human creation by the tactful and playful dictions expressing experiences, ideas, feelings, emotions, etc. to depict social realities. Art is created for many purposes- beauty (estheticism), truth, pleasure, realism, fantasy, imitation, reflection of life, didacticism (teaching), exposure of the world, etc.

Therefore, literature is an art. Basically, a literary work presents an aspect of life, making the work itself a true mirror of life. Literature is creative writing of recognized artistic value.

The aim of language teaching is to impart linguistic skills to the language learners; that is to help the learners to acquire competence in language use. In other words, teaching in creative environment maximally facilitates learning by helping the language learner to learn. Collie and Slater (1987, p.2) write, "Literature speaks to the heart as much as to the mind and provides material with some emotional colour that can make fuller contact with the learner's own life and thus counterbalance the more fragmented effect of many collections of texts used in the classroom." And Collie and Slater (1987, p.2) further say, "If language is taught through rules and grammatical structure, it becomes boring and tedious for the learners. If it is taught through literature, language learning becomes interesting." In the same way, Lazar (2009, p.24) writes, "Literature is useful tool for encouraging students to draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions. It helps students to become more actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in learning English and hence aids acquisition."

Literary and Non-literary Texts

Lao and Krashen's study (2000) compared the reading achievement between a group of students that read literary texts and a second group that read non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong. This study revealed that the group who read literary texts made better improvement in vocabulary and reading.

According to Oster (1989: 85), reading literary texts leads to critical thinking. He confirms, "Focusing on point of view in literature enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking by dramatizing the various ways a situation can be seen ". This could happen because when students read, they interact with the text. By interacting with the text, they interpret what they read. By interpreting what they read, they can work toward speaking English more creatively. Oster (Ibid.) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively.

Language is way of communication. Language teaching is teaching the way of communicating. The aim of language teaching is to impart linguistic skills to the language learners; that is to help the learners to acquire competence in language use. In other words, teaching in creative environment that maximally facilitates learning by helping the language learner to learn. Content on the other hand is the subject matter of any topics. Language teaching is teaching linguistic skills and content teaching is teaching the subject matter of any subject. ELT include both language and content teaching. In ELT class different language skill is taught according to the subject matter. ELT is base on the content given in course. The objective of ELT is to help students to communicate fluently in the target language; teachers should provide a good method and an authentic model of language use.

Local Language in ELT and Authenticity

Both student and teacher use local language in ELT classes to achieve their pedagogical purpose in non-native English class. Using local language is taken as negative attitudes in ELT class for two reasons: one as the history of ELT and Teacher's education and the other is related to the study of literature for second language acquisition. The traditional grammar translation approach gives primary position to local language that means a language is considered literary in local context. This might be or might not be the same as a learner's mother tongue. Other major teaching approaches like direct approach, audio-lingual approach, cognitive approach, natural approaches, communicative approaches, etc. give different new ideas for non-native English students and teachers.

Swan, Kirkpatrick and Cummins (2011) provide guidelines on how to use local languages ‘guilt free’ in an English language class. Among other things, they state that using the local language help in making the context comprehensible because it allows teachers/ students to build from the known, provide a translation for difficult grammar and vocabulary and use cross-linguistic comparisons. Different types of texts can be given in ELT course. To teach a text only in English language is not sufficient. There is need of local language also. Some words can’t be translated into English. At that time, to make learners understand, the local language can be used.

There is always a debate on the issue of authenticity of ELT texts. Traditionally authentic texts, i.e. texts from native English writers, are preferred. As the situation has changed, English language is no more property of the native speakers. Texts and teaching materials are locally designed and used in ELT classes. Local social and cultural impacts are dominant in such texts. The article ‘A Critical Look at the Concept of Authenticity’ intended to briefly overview the concept of authenticity. The article says that the concept of authenticity develops from various perspectives and the term is not merely to be applied to texts. Being genuine and authentic, texts must be relevant and potentially communicative. Learners must feel positive towards task and activities to help authentic interaction emerge. Their interpretation of teaching materials relies mostly on teachers’ oral output and authenticating strategies. (Shomoossi and Ketabi, 2007)

One advantage of authentic materials is widely shown by many people. That is, they are supposed to provide ‘native speaker’ use of language. It has real purpose and offers model of language use for its learners. However, many problematic issues are raised against this assumption.

- Firstly, the idea of ‘native speaker’ authenticity is blurred because English is used by more non-native speakers than native speakers (Crystal, 1997) in diverse contexts and disciplines for real communicative purposes; and it is also argued that it is not native English but lingua-franca English that most ESL learners need to acquire (Ur, 2008).
- Secondly, if the goal of using authentic materials is to offer ‘models’ of target language use to the learners, we cannot conclude that every native speaker’s use of language provides a ‘model’.
- Thirdly, the idea that language used for a ‘real purpose’ (e.g. shopping, booking a ticket) is authentic is also problematic, because whatever the context is, if any communication takes place between people who understand each other, a communicative purpose is achieved.

Therefore, it can be argued that the best option is to offer the competent use of language, whether native or nonnative, as a model.

Beaugrande (2001) says that textbooks are more useful when they are based on authentic native English. Beaugrande says that from the point of view of fluency and Fox (1987) adds that they can also achieve a degree of naturalness in the use of foreign language. However, Graddol suggests that the ‘centre of gravity’ of the inner, outer and expanding circles would shift towards ‘non-native’ English speakers at the start of the 21st century: those who speak English alongside other languages will outnumber first language speakers and, increasingly, will decide the global future of the language. (Graddol, 1997: 10) From this point of view, textbooks cannot be confined to authentic native English. Concepts of authenticity and native English vanish when they start talking about World Englishes. The ownership of English and hence of English language texts, as Graddol remarks in his book, has already shifted geographically and demographically from the centre to the periphery.

Regarding use of English language, Kamala Das writes, in one of her poems, with different realizations-

I speak three languages, write in two, dream in one

Do not write in English, they said

English is not your mother tongue

The language I speak becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness

All mine, mine alone, it is half English, half

Indian, funny perhaps

but it is honest, it is as human as I am human

It voices my joys, my longings my hopes (Kamala Das, 1965, p. 10).

Kamala Das wrote in English with distortions but that was her own language in spite of its strangeness. Many Nepali writers have written several books in English and their contribution is still highly recognized. Society of Nepali Writers in English (NWEN) was established in 2000 with the aim of promoting original writings in English by Nepalese authors.

Local Language in Nepali English Literature

We need to make efforts to reveal why, how and to what degree English literature created in Nepal is nativized. In order to study the nativization in English literature in Nepal, we can study works of Samrat Upadhyay, Rabi Thapa, Abhi Subedi, D. B. Gurung, Govinda Raj Bhattarai, Vishnu Singh Rai, Manjushree Thapa and many others. The expressions exhibit Nepaleseness with reference to the criteria of transfer, shift, hybridization, lexical borrowing, code switching and mixing and reduplication.

In Arresting God, Samrat Upadhyay presents all Nepali characters with local names and even Nepali language used with English. Radhika, Pramod, Shambhu, Acharya, Durga, Deepak Misra, Anju, Bandana, Hiralal, Rukmini, Shanti, Shakuntala, Moti, Rammaya, Ramcharan, Shanti, Nandini etc. are some of the names of the characters. Various locations of Kathmandu valley like Pashupatinath, Hanuman Dhoka, Annapurna Hotel, Royal Palace, Swyambhunath Temple, Jaisideval, Tundikhel field, Thapathali, Chhetrapati, Keshar Mahal, Tribhuvan International Airport, Durwar Marg etc. are used. The deliberate selection of Nepalese characters and settings and events in the stories plays a crucial role in demonstrating Nepalese socio-political and cultural attributes in English language. Apart from that, the anthology is heavily nativized from linguistic perspective. Here are some examples of expressions picked from the stories:

"Hare Shiva, she said, "How are we going to pay the next month's rent?"

I will go and see Shambhu-Da tomorrow.

Pramod-ji, I did not know you were such a religious man.

"That's ridiculous" Nani Memsahab said abruptly.

Shambhu-Da is still doing puja, praying and chanting to the gods.

(Upadhyay, 2000, pp. 1-191)

There are Nepalese English expressions in Rabi Thapa's stories as well;

Chup! That's enough

It's a big day for you –you're going to be a man once your bratabandh is done.

Khadka Miss was unmarried.

La, see you tomorrow.

Oho! Sunita Upadhyay has become a pheminist, you hear?

(Thapa, 2011, Pp.1-172)

The above analysis shows that Nepalese authors are applying various rhetorical strategies to add Nepalese essence in their literary texts. In order to show Nepaleseness in English literature, most Nepalese authors have socio-cultural and linguistic elements. For example, most of the authors suffix the names of elders and seniors with *-ji*, which is a typical Nepali way of addressing elders and respectable people. In the same way, the Nepalese kinship terms have been used such as *Da, Didi, Bhinaju, Bhai, Bahini, Ba, Chhori, mastersaab, phupaju*, etc.

Zhang (2002) argues “address terms play an important role in conveying cultural messages, especially concerning the interlocutors and power relation between them” (p.308). Nepalese authors hybridize words in their works for exhibiting local cultural identities. For example, Manjushree Thapa uses the words such as *Americane*. This is the Nepalese way of addressing to underestimate the addressee or to show anger or maybe affection towards him/her.

They have also adopted lexical borrowing, using of lexical items from local languages if target language lacks them. When authors feel, while writing, that English lacks a lexical item with the same semantic interpretation, they borrow from the Nepalese languages. There are several examples of such borrowings. They also borrow many Nepalese interjections such as *oho, Aeya, oi, hanh, heyaah, khai, bas* etc. They also often switch their code from English to Nepali several times. They also work with reduplication. i.e. repetition of a constituent of the sentence or the use of appositive elements.

Aah, kasto naraamro sang maaryo ni tyaslai. Bichara! How they killed him, the poor wretch.
(Thapa, 2011, p. 120).

T. S. Eliot writes ‘Data, Daya, Dharma’ in his poem ‘The Waste Land’. Rabindranath Tagore uses the words Brahmins, amaloki, and many other local words in his works. R. K. Narayan also uses local words. In “A Horse and Two Goats” when he is given a visiting card by the stranger, Muni shrinks away in distrust:

Perhaps he was trying to present a warrant and arrest him. Beware of khaki, one part of his mind warned. don't get caught. Beware of khaki. He wished he weren't seventy. At seventy one didn't run, but surrendered to whatever came. He could only ward off trouble by talk. So he went on.

Like Indian English, Nepali English is also getting established in the world. We can see that from McArthur's circle of World Englishes which employs the phrase ‘Nepalese English’ as a sub-variety of South Asian English (McArthur, 1998, p. 97). We must be happy with this term because this is perhaps the biggest recognition of the Nepalese socio-cultural facets in English in Nepal.

Dhrub Chandra Gautam's "Hem Subba ate Paan" is a Nepali story translated into English. Although the story is written in English language, there are different Nepali and Hindi words. Different typical local Nepali words like *Namaskar*, *Sahuji*, *Paan*, *Hajur* etc. are Nepali words used in the story by the different characters while communicating. The words *Sahuji*, *Hajur* are used as polite words. The word *Namaskar* is used for greeting and the word *Paan* is important word which is used in the title of the story also. It is Nepali word derived from Hindi language which doesn't have English translation. These Nepali words can be used in ELT class. Though no English translation of these local Nepali words we can teach them in ELT class. The word *Paan* is the South Asian food item usually served at the end of the meal and at certain ceremonies such as wedding, receptions, mehendi parties etc. It is also used as mouth freshener after a heavy meal. The word *Sahuji* is from Nepali language. It is used for rich and high class of people. In the story "Hem Subba Ate Paan Hem Subba" this word is used for Merchant. The word *Namaste* is Nepali word which is use for greeting. Generally people use this for respected and renowned people. It is used as official greeting also. The word *Hajoor* is also used for higher class and respected people in Nepal. It is a local Nepali word used in polite conversations. To show politeness and praise somebody the term is used.

In the story, both authentic English and so-called non-authentic language are used. We can call it bilingual creativity. Some Nepali words are used in the story. The story blends with English and Nepali language. Nepali local words present local feelings. The story shows two communities (Pahadi and Madhesi), their culture and their language variations. This story's language, content and context are certainly authentic in the sense that it is relevant in ELT for local language learners as classroom authentic text.

CONCLUSIONS

All the references and discussions made above suggest that local language can be used in ELT classrooms in authentic way because it helps with an ELT text, with a particular context and also with local socio-cultural and linguistic facets. Local language can assist in successful ELT pedagogic outcomes and the language naturally can be regarded as authentic in ELT classroom.

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